

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 231

(Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee, *et al.*) (By Request - Departmental - Veterans Affairs)

Environment and Transportation

Judicial Proceedings

Vehicle Laws - Special Registration Plates - Gold Star and Next of Kin Families

This departmental bill authorizes the recipient of a U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) Next of Kin lapel button to apply for special registration plates after submitting specified documentation to the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA), similar to DOD Gold Star recipients under current law. The bill also waives the one-time fee for the issuance of such special registration plates to recipients of either a Gold Star or Next of Kin lapel button.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect State finances or operations, as the number of new fee exemptions (and new plate issuances) is assumed to be minimal. Reprogramming and special registration plate design changes can be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). The Department of Legislative Services concurs with this assessment. (The attached assessment does not reflect amendments to the bill.)

Analysis

Bill Summary: To be eligible to receive the plate, the vehicle for which the plate is to be affixed must be a Class A (passenger), Class E (truck with a rated capacity of one ton or less), Class M (multipurpose), or Class D (motorcycle) vehicle. In addition, an applicant

who qualifies due to having received a Next of Kin Lapel button must provide satisfactory proof to MVA that the applicant is a recipient of the button for surviving spouses, parents, and next of kin of members of the Armed Forces who lost their lives while serving on active duty (or while assigned to a reserve or National Guard unit in a drill status). This requirement is similar to the existing requirement for Gold Star recipients.

Current Law: The contribution of the U.S. Armed Forces is recognized through several provisions within the Maryland Vehicle Law. Specifically, Maryland has exemptions from registration fees for veterans with certain disabilities and vehicles owned by national veterans' organizations as well as special registration plates for honorably discharged veterans; recipients of individually earned, combat-related U.S. Armed Forces medals; and recipients of a DOD Gold Star indicating status as a surviving spouse, parent, or next of kin of a member of the U.S. Armed Forces who lost his or her life in combat.

Special registration plates for recipients of an individually earned combat-related, Armed Forces medal must pay the annual registration fee required under State law and each time new registration plates are issued for the vehicle.

Background: MDVA advises that Gold Star and Next of Kin families are often working-class families, and the bill's fee waiver for the issuance of such special registration plates is intended to signal the State supports those families and recognizes their sacrifices.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 275 (Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee)(By Request - Departmental - Veterans Affairs) - Judicial Proceedings.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 2, 2024
rh/ljm Third Reader - March 15, 2024
Revised - Amendment(s) - March 15, 2024

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ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESSES

TITLE OF BILL: Vehicle Laws - Special Registration Plates - Gold Star and Next of Kin Families

BILL NUMBER: HB 231

PREPARED BY: Robert Finn

PART A. ECONOMIC IMPACT RATING

This agency estimates that the proposed bill:

WILL HAVE MINIMAL OR NO ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL BUSINESS

OR

WILL HAVE MEANINGFUL ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL BUSINESSES

PART B. ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

N/A